

President Kennedy stirred the imagination of our nation and inspired a generation to "ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country." One of the great sons of Maryland, Sargent Shriver, took Kennedy's words, and answered that clarion call to a life in public service and has become one of the greatest public servants in the history of our nation.

Sargent

Shriver's devotion to this nation - and humanity - sets an example for all to emulate and a high bar that only a few will ever hope to exceed.

A native of the State of Maryland, and in fact a member of one of the Free State's founding families, Shriver has dedicated his life to improving the lives of others.

In 1960, he joined the Presidential campaign of then-Senator Kennedy.

After the election, he was asked by President Kennedy to create the Peace Corps and in March 1961 was appointed its founding Director.

Shriver's vision for the Peace Corps was

straightforward and strong: 'to permit Americans to participate directly, personally, and effectively in this struggle for human dignity.'

In nearly six years at the Peace Corps, Shriver developed programs in 55 countries with more than 14,500 volunteers. Forty-two years later, the solid foundation that he created has only strengthened and expanded.

Today, 163,000 Peace Corps volunteers have served in 135 countries.

Each year, during the last week of April, we recognize National Volunteer Week and the proud legacy of volunteers who have dedicated their lives to serving their fellow citizens and improving their communities. Thanks to celebrated citizens like Sargent Shriver, Maryland has a rich history of volunteering. In 1633 the Maryland Charter established its first volunteer militia, beginning Maryland's tradition in volunteering.

The Independent Hose Company of Frederick was established in 1818 as the first volunteer fire company.

Maryland also is the only state in the country with an official volunteer State flag.

Maryland residents have given of their time in a variety of

ways, from protecting and preserving Maryland's natural environment, to mentoring and tutoring young people, spending time with the elderly, feeding the hungry and homeless, donating time and money to non-profits, serving in local civic organizations and countless other community services.

It is estimated that, in 2006, 1.19 million Marylanders volunteered a total of 166.5 million hours of their time in community service.

Between 1989 and the present Maryland's

volunteer rate
increased by 9.2
percent. Our residents,
our environment, and
our children have
benefited from the
self-giving donations,
but our economy has
profited as well. To put
the value of
volunteerism into

perspective, consider that an hour of work donated by a volunteer in Maryland is estimated to be worth \$19.06.

At that rate, with Marylanders volunteering a total of 166.5 million hours in

2006, the value added to our state's economy last year alone is more than \$3 billion.

It goes without saying that volunteers provide a critical service to our

state and our
country.

We take this
opportunity to
express our gratitude
to those who
sacrifice their
personal time for the
good of others, but

we also send out a
call for action to
mobilize all
Marylanders to join
the volunteer corps
and to share your
talents.

You can help

improve the quality
of life in Maryland
by choosing from a
wide variety of
organizations in
need of help.

I have compiled a
list of venues

where you can find
opportunities to
volunteer on my
website, located at

[www.hoyer.house.
gov](http://www.hoyer.house.gov)

, and I encourage
you to locate an

organization,
non-profit, or
individual that
could use your
help.

Whether you have
an hour to give or
a whole year, the

opportunities to
give of your time
are endless.

National
Volunteer Week
provides us with

an important
opportunity to
recognize one of
the driving forces
of our nation, the
compassion of
its citizens and
their willingness

to share their
talents. I hope
you will join me
in paying tribute
to the
indispensable
volunteers
whose work

strengthens our
state and
country, while at
the same time
pledging to join
the state of
Maryland's
honorable legacy

by answering the
call to volunteer
service.